HFS

akaBot goes SaaS-first to deliver robust process-specific RPA

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The Situation: FPT Software's akaBot RPA is now being offered as a SaaS-first solution which handles process-specific updates and interfaces so that they don't interrupt customers' work when changes happen.

akaBot is an RPA solution from Vietnam-based FPT Software which can integrate with FPT's OCR/AI, voice, and chatbots ecosystem, but it operates with its own website and go-to-market strategy. As a SaaS offering, the initial focus will be on providing an affordable solution to automatically process all document-related workflows in invoice handling for Vietnamese small and medium enterprises. This is far from the extent of the ambition for akaBot but starting at home makes sense when targeting non-English-speaking countries in Southeast Asia.

Government-defined invoicing makes 100% accuracy achievable

Targeting invoice handling is not uncommon among RPA providers. Every company must invoice and manage tax payments. The advantage for akaBot in Vietnam is that the government insists all invoices must follow a certain format. Even with handwritten invoices, akaBot achieved greater than 80% accuracy.

From July of this year, the government will enforce that all invoicing must be electronic. The data is very structured and relatively easy to ingest in these circumstances. akaBot's claim of 100% accuracy seems reasonable. This initial SaaS solution is a response to paying close attention to the needs of the market and the requirements of customers.

akaBot takes responsibility for tax office updates—delivered via SaaS

Like tax offices everywhere, Vietnam's tax officials make regular changes that even accountants in the smallest firms must stay on top of. For the most part, they must make updates to their on-premises solutions to get up to date. For an on-premises bot, the challenge would be the same.

akaBot solves this by taking responsibility for making the relevant updates in real-time. Since its bots are genuinely delivered via SaaS, there's no break.

By taking responsibility for the key interface in an end-to-end process, akaBot has made its very specific RPA robust versus this regular interruption.

The range of solutions will grow as akaBot rolls out

akaBot intends to roll out across Southeast Asia, where RPA is barely touching the ranks of companies beyond trickle-down use by multi-nationals. The SaaS approach will enable regional expansion. The akaBot SaaS business unit was only founded last year but has already reached more than 300 customers with targeted solutions for invoicing, organizing stakeholder meetings, and payment solutions. As it expands with solutions for finance, insurance, logistics, and retail, it is on course to serve as many as 6,000 customers this year.

akaBot has relationships with Celonis for process intelligence and with major business process management, artificial intelligence, and machine learning providers. It can also integrate with FPT's voicebot and chatbot capabilities.

While other providers will argue they also offer SaaS models, akaBot claims the difference is that it built its model from the ground-up as SaaS, giving it the real-time update ability required of bot management in the pursuit of the robust delivery of specific processes and an easy-to-scale business model.

The Bottom Line: Putting the customer first leads to practical solutions that scale

akaBot created a practical solution to a key need: It took ownership of the update problem. This may only apply to specific end-to-end processes, but it is also only possible when a technology vendor takes the time and trouble to understand specific customer needs. Those needs may seem niche in the case of keeping up with changes from the Vietnamese tax office, but when those needs can be well served and found in thousands of customers, the scale will follow.

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David leads our Emerging Technology Practice – tracking OneOffice enablers from automation and AI, to data and design thinking, integration, process orchestration, workflow and intelligence. He is deeply engaged in research into business value delivered by SaaS, and also leads our HFS Hot Vendors program.

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